Edited Interview with Myrtle Allen, Ballymaloe House, (7/5/2003)

Máirtín Mac Con Iomaire **(MM)** Myrtle Allen **(MA)**

1. **MM:** You were born in, was it 1928.
2. **MA:** No '24 I'm sorry to say. Next year, a big year (laugh).
3. **MM:** So you'll be 80 next year. Oh my God. You're looking well for it.
4. **MA:** Well, the years are there.
5. **MM:** Where were you born?
6. **MA:** I was born in Cork, Cork city, Tivoli. The other side of the harbour, I came across in the Ferry (laugh). Married a Cork man this side of the harbour.
7. **MM:** What's your maiden name?
8. **MA:** My maiden name was Hill, my family lived and worked in Cork for generations, you know. Architects. My father was an Architect yes. My mother's father was in the cattle trade in Cork.
9. **MM:** And what brought you.....Marriage brought you across the river? (Laugh).
10. **MA:** Marriage brought me across the river, yeah (laugh).
11. **MM:** The ways of true love?
12. **MA:** (Laugh) that's right. And by bicycle I can tell you in those days, the war was on (laugh).
13. **MM:** That was..... What year was that?
14. **MA:** I got married in '43 and I've been here in this locality ever since.
15. **MM:** Okay, but you weren't in this house?
16. **MA:** No, we didn't move in until 1948.
17. **MM:** How did you come to purchase this place?
18. **MA:** Well I'll tell you my husband was in horticulture, and of course in a way, looking back on it, there were sort of boom years during the war, you see. There was no way you could spend money, there was nothing to buy and he was sending out all he could possibly produce. It was going across to England. Well, the boat to Wales or the train to Rosslare and then across and you know, everyday he was turning out tomatoes, mushrooms, cucumbers, apples and sending them all off.
19. **MM:** How many acres did he have?
20. **MA:** He had, in those days, he had, he was a partner in a small farm. When I say small, by present day standards, it was a hundred acres. I mean it was a sort of nice little farm at the time but farms are inclined to get a bit bigger at the moment. He was very lucky because there was the family living on the farm. In fact there was the remains of a family and there was just the son and

daughter left and neither of them married as was, it happened often in those days, and they had no way out and the old man knew my husband very well as a boy in school and he asked them to come and help him work on the farm and that was in 1932. It was at the height of economic war and farming was very bad and he came into, sort of the young person, and this gentleman sent him off to England straight away to learn apple growing because the only thing that seemed to be any hope was in horticulture. And of course Dev (De Valera) was strongly backing that at the time. And you know Dev had the policy that we should be self-sufficient and have plenty of industry. You couldn't sell cattle, you know, couldn't sell milk. Everything was rock bottom price. The farmers were in a desperate state. So he went and he learnt apple growing and he went on an excursion to the Lee Valley and he saw the tomato growing going on. So he came back and he grew the apples and he picked the apples, there were already obviously orchards there, mature orchards actually when he arrived, some and he planted more.

21. **MM:** Where did he go for the apples, was it Somerset or somewhere like that?

22. **MA:** No, it was on the East Coast of England.

23. **MM:** East Anglia or somewhere like that.

24. **MA:** Somewhere there now, I can't think of the name of the place. I'll probably be able to give it to you later on. Yeah, yeah.

25. **MM:** And for the tomatoes?

26. **MA:** The tomatoes the Lee Valley. That was the great place for tomatoes.

27. **MM:** Where is the Lee Valley?

28. **MA:** I don't know actually. I never did know. There must be a River Lee somewhere in England. Lea possibly.

29. **MM:** We'll find it out (laugh).

30. **MA:** Funny now that I've forgotten where he went to do his training.

31. **MM:** Oh it's not important. It will come back to you.

32. **MA:** Yeah, okay, yeah. They're still there. They're a big family of fruit growers.

33. **MM:** So there were apples here?

34. **MA:** Yes apples were the first thing they started growing. So then he decided that he'd like to branch out into general horticulture and this place was on the market. There was an auction of course, we knew them, and funny enough I was introduced to him for the first time, in the dining room here (laugh). I knew the girl living in the house and I was over at a party and em so he went to the auction to sort of wish them well, you know, that they'd do well in the auction. There was no bid. So they were stuck with the place and they'd already bought another place and they were very badly stuck financially and he discussed it with the old man, his partner and they decided they would offer what they thought would be a fair price for it, and it was accepted, so that was it.

35. That was '47. We moved in '48. So that was, so we had a mixed farm in those days and I mean the kids were small. I mean that was '48, '58, '64 was a good bit later, you see. Sixteen years later.

36. **MM:** So '64 you opened up as a guesthouse?

37. **MA:** Yeah, because we often thought, but not a guesthouse, no.

38. **MM:** Oh yeah, as a restaurant?

39. **MA:** We were very much aware that there was, we were very interested in food generally speaking and quality food and my husband was a great gourmet, he loved food and he was very discerning about it and I didn't actually even know how to cook when I was married. I had sort of a vague idea all right and I done my year in the School of Commerce of Cork when I left school, something like two hours a week or two hours twice a week and I just had a, I didn't know much. So I had to teach myself how to cook (laugh). See you had to cook in those days there was no food. See there was no petrol, nobody could get anywhere. We did get a delivery for the butcher and I don't know whether he had a horse and trap or whether he had petrol, I can't remember now. We would occasionally, somebody would bring a cart over from Ballycotton with fish in it, and everything else virtually we grew ourselves. We would get up to Cork. We had a certain allowance of petrol for the trucks going up to deliver the food to the train or the boat. You see we had an allowance for that. But I mean it was really, you had to just cook, I mean with all the ingredients and I had books because I was very interested. I'd bought books and there you are, you had the food, you had the cooker, you had to do something (laugh). So it was and then I eventually got a job writing the cookery column in the Irish Farmers Journal.

40. **MM:** How did that come about?

41. **MA:** Well my husband was a very, for the time, a very innovative and forward thinking farmer and we had somebody down from the Farmers Journal and he stayed the night and we gave him a meal and he said to me 'I'm looking for somebody for the Journal, to write for the Journal. And actually I'm looking for somebody to write about art' and I said 'well I couldn't do that, but I could write about food, I could write about cooking.' 'Oh he said that's just what we want, we'd like a farmers wife to do the cooking column' So that thought me a lot because every two weeks I had to have a column ready and I had to, it's like going to a university, you've got to read it up in two or three different sources and I got myself extra cookery books to just read and I had enough cop on to get the best people that were writing and then you'd have to go into the kitchen and do it and you'd have to adjust the recipe to the ingredients and then write it up and then publish it. So it was a great training.

42. **MM:** Yeah, absolutely, yeah. And who were the writers at that time that sort of influenced you?

43. **MA:** Originally there was a person that nobody ever really revered at all, a guy called Philip Harben. But he wrote a book called 'The Way to Cook' and it was terribly simple and that saved my life first. That and the Aga Cookery Book, we'd an Aga. They were very reliable recipes and then after that, well I just read everything and a lot of things would be just astray but if you weren't used to cooking they were not explicit enough or reliable enough. A lot of recipes they would expect you to go on your own instincts but if you didn't have any instincts (laugh) at that stage (laugh). One or two from the School of Commerce I certainly used and I had been staying with a friend in England for (inaudible) and I used one or two of her recipes and I had books and I just took them out of the books. Em, well there was books that nobody has really heard now. There was a little tiny publication that came out in England and I had been in England for four or five months before I was married and it was called, and of course they were very short of food, it was called the 'Country Housewives Handbook'. That was fantastic because I was in the country and this was for people in the country and they had all how the jams were to be made, the cakes that you could make and all, anything you would want. Actually it had garden tips in it as well, how to grow things, how to use surplus of fruit or bottle it or whatever. So that was great and I had another farming one, again from the Farmers, the English Farmer's Weekly had one out called Farmhouse Fair. I had that. I had a paperback by a person called Bee Neilson. She was a New Zealander I think and she was completely exact in everything she did, so that was very good, because if you took her measurements and measured accurately the thing worked.

44. But it was amazing how many, I mean Elizabeth David, wonderful to read but you'd have to know a lot because an accurate measurement was not her strong point. She might fire you with enthusiasm but she didn't give, really, really, accurate measurements if you were sort of really, not sure what to do. There was quite a lot of their books there. Well I have my mother's book and my grandmother's book (laugh).

45. **MM:** Had you grown up with good food at home? Was your mother a good cook?

46. **MA:** I don't know. my aunt said to me once, I don't know how you can, she said, Elsie never cooked anything (laugh). That was my mother, but I think she was just being catty. We had good basic food, very good basic food. We had a little garden and we grew everything for ourselves out of the garden. So everything was fresh. Fresh vegetables.

47. **MM:** But you were city folk?

48. **MA:** Very basic. We were outside the city, we were on the edge of the harbour. Very basic! My mother would go in, she'd get, what she reckoned was the best meat in the market and the best fish she'd buy, as far as she could, and then all the fruit and vegetables came from the garden and then you know when the bakers, we bought from the bakers, Thompson's Van would come around in those days and that was it really.

49. **MM:** But it was an education, the Farmer's Journal writing was an education in itself?

50. **MA:** It was actually.

51. **MM:** Very good. And how long did you continue with that?

52. **MA:** A couple of years I think, about two years. The was early '60's.

53. **MM:** So the first fifteen years of married life it was devoted to family really and farming or even more probably yeah.

54. **MA:** Well I had six children in a house this size. Actually the house was divided in two. We didn't have all of it. It was too big. It has two staircases so divided very easily but still I mean it was still a lot to keep you know. To look after the children properly, in those days the man would do the work and was meant to bring in the money (laugh) and the woman was meant to mind the house and mind the children and there wasn't, I think it was better really cause there wasn't this awful dashing out trying to hold down a job as well, you know. Putting your child into a crèche or something and having to….. You know what happens when the child gets sick, just go back to the child, do you stay in work and leave it? I think really it was better if you just did the children. That was it. Look after them, we looked after the house, I mean, there was men to feed, you know, a house to keep clean and…..

55. **MM:** Oh it was a full-time job (laugh).

56. **MA:** It was more than a full-time job. I used usually have somebody helping me.

57. **MM:** So talking about food, when would you have gone out for your first meal? When would you have experienced your first meal in a restaurant?

58. **MA:** Oh didn't go as a family. As a family we didn't go out very much at all, when I was a child. I hardly remember going out. Thompson's in Cork. You got, not dinner, you didn't go out to dinner, you'd go out and have lunch maybe or tea and I remember if things began to, my husband you see, he was very interested and keen on food and he had a family sort of upbringing that was orientated toward restaurant food. His father was quite a gourmet. His father long ago he used to go to Waterford on business and he would telephone the hotel, book a room and book a

sole for his dinner and he'd have then he went down exactly he'd tell them how he wanted it. He was, he had being going out with his father occasionally for meals and I remember, so I would go mainly in Dublin if I went up with him. His family lived up in Drogheda so I would possibly go up with him and we would go to the Red Bank or we went to Jammet's and I particularly remember on one occasion the dinner cost twenty-five shillings and it was sort of pandemonium when we told people how much we paid for it you know (laugh). Wasting our money.

59. **MM:** And that was for how many people?

60. **MA:** Oh each. Twenty-five shillings each.

61. **MM:** Wow. What year would that be?

62. **MA:** It would be very early '40's, '43 or '44, I'm not sure around about there, either '42, '43 or '44, I'm not sure which.

63. **MM:** What do you remember of Jammet's?

64. **MA:** Well I remember that they did a service that I would love to have here, always liked. They would bring, what do you call it, the little serving table up to the customers.

65. **MM:** A la Russe, is it? (**note**: Gueridon service is the what was meant)

66. **MA:** I remember again in this instance, I think it was the sole we had, a bit flat fish, and the waiter was sufficiently skilled to, perhaps it was skinned, I'm not sure, I'm sure it was in a béarnaise sauce and he would fillet you one fillet onto the plate and you could have more or not. You know you could have what you like. I absolutely hated plated food. I mean the chef has no idea of the amount I want to eat (laugh) and I don't want to be given a plate full of food. I hate leaving food behind, I think it's awful to waste food and I just don't like it. We do it all the time, I hate it (laugh). And that's what I remember about Jammet's you got.....

67. **MM:** But the silver service and the table service like that.....?

68. **MA:** It was very good. It was very civilised. They might put a big silver cover on it then you see and come back and give it to you later if you wanted more and I think that's a perfect way of doing it. And then we used to go Jammet's bar quite often and that was great fun downstairs. It was lovely. Completely tiled, in fact it was a sort of men's place but women were allowed in. You slunk in hoping nobody would say anything and it was mainly men drinking and a lot of them having oysters and stout, oysters and Guinness.

69. **MM:** Yeah, there was an oyster bar there or was it just oysters?

70. **MA:** It was a general bar you could have any dish that was the main dining room., in the bar but very informal and very fast. Lovely, I loved it. So we often went there in Dublin.

71. **MM:** You mentioned the Red Bank as well. What was that like? Was that different?

72. **MA:** No, I'm just trying to think. The Red Bank was, was the Red Bank.....

73. **MM:** The Red Bank was on D'Olier Street wasn't it.

74. **MA:** Yes. I think the Red Bank was fish. Don't remember very clearly. I only went there once and again it was great fun, it was very nice. White table cloths and good fish, you know. It was grand and then there was another one, there was another one in Dame Street, if you were walking up the street from Trinity, with Trinity behind you, it would be on the right-hand side. I don't know what it was called, they did a lot of steaks and things like that. That was good, it

wasn't as expensive as Jammet's, slightly more affordable (laugh). We didn't very often go to Jammet's restaurant actually, and then gradually then I went to the Russell, a few time. The Russell was wonderful and I remember I knew a lot more about cooking when I went to the Russell and I was able to, I remember, they did, we're not doing it all now, and it's lovely. In those days if you were serving fish with hollandaise sauce, you didn't fill the plate with hollandaise, you in French they call it *napé*, it that the word you use and on the fillet, just off the side of the spoon, shake it off so that it's not all over the plate, just barely covering it and then they put it under the grill and brown it. It was the first time I'd come across that and it was just so good. I still think it's the best way of serving it, but fashion!!!

75. **MM:** That's it. Ah sure it goes round in a circle doesn't it?

76. **MA:** It does (laugh). If you get enough you get the full flavour, and piles of rich stuff. So those were my memories of the Dublin restaurant. So we didn't really go out much in Cork. The odd time we'd go to have a steak in the Oyster Tavern or.....

77. **MM:** Was there any outstanding restaurant in Cork?

78. **MA:** I think Oyster Tavern was really the best one. I mean the thing was steak then, to have a steak. And it was lovely, the open grill fire, oh it's a pity it's gone.

79. **MM:** It was cooked in the room as such?

80. **MA:** Cooked in the dining room, yes, yeah. It's a great pity it's gone. It was panelled you know so it was a lovely room and then you'd go out into the bar and of course it was really glamorous. I was delighted because when I was younger I wasn't allowed to go there (laugh) but it was a great thing to grow up (laugh) and go. That was great. It really was sort of club like, and of course anybody could go in, and you see smart people. That's the other thing that's fun. You'd see smart young people there and that's what you saw in the Hibernian (Dublin). The Hibernian of course was very good too and they had this wonderful big hall that you entered and if you sat in that hall like anybody who was in Dublin, didn't matter who it was, whatever celebrity you'd see them walking through sooner or later. It was great fun.

81. **MM:** But there was, you talk about style and that, you know, you dressed up to go out those day didn't you?

82. **MA:** Everybody dressed much more then. You wouldn't go out in jeans (laugh).

83. **MM:** Do you remember the likes of dress dances or that sort of thing at all or.....?

84. **MA:** We didn't really go to very many but I suppose we did a few hunt balls around here, you know, go to a few hunt balls. When you were young the first ball you traditionally went to was a charity ball. There was one for one of the hospitals in Cork and that's where, if you were just out of school, seventeen or eighteen, the first dance you were allowed to go to was the Victoria Hospital or one of the hospital charities, and I got engaged (laugh). I rang home, I'm getting engaged to be married the night of course I was there and my father said 'you are not, get Ivan to come to see me tomorrow morning' (laugh). 'You're not to announce it' (laugh). It was funny. I'll tell you what I remember, there was a few private dance too. People gave dances in their house and I remember leaving home, I suppose we left at about six or seven o'clock in a winters night, it was dark, you'd be wearing trousers I expect, I don't know what I wore and you'd put on your dress when you got there and then an awful thing at about two o'clock in the morning at a winter's morning, like late December or early January and you know the way your absolutely dead tired, at the end of a dance at two o'clock in the morning and it could be raining or frosting or anything and out of the dress and back into the pants and onto the damn bike and out in the weather to cycle home again (laugh).

85. **MM:** The torment of it. (laugh).

86. **MA:** Wretched (laugh). It was horrible but we did it. So that was it.

87. **MM:** So when you started here you started as a restaurant.

88. **MA:** But first of all we started the farmhouse just. The farmhouse yeah and then when I went into business with the restaurant in 1964 but in a very small way. I mean, I had no restaurant training, I was just going on sort of common sense and having been around enough to observe. I was influenced to some extent I suppose, but it was very different, by Heidle MacNeice and she'd had what really was the forerunner of the modern restaurant, the Spinnaker in Kinsale. There also was another one, I think Man Friday and it's still there I think, that one also opened about the same time. I think it was owned by the man that started the whole concept of Kinsale gourmet circle, Peter Barry, I think, the same name as the TD. I think he was Peter Barry.

89. **MM:** And when was the Spinnaker opened?

90. **MA:** They would all have opened, you see there was no petrol in the '40s, there was not much, we had food alright, we always had food thank God in Ireland, although we'd be short of sugar and tropical fruits and things like that and they didn't open until things began ease out, I would say about the end of the '50s or very early '60s they opened. Early '60s I would say, about four or five years before me. The English restaurant, the sort of well known English country house restaurants they all opened about the same time. And if you know the one's up in the lake district, Miller Howe, Sharrow Bay and a lot of the others, well know restaurants in country houses opened in the late '50s and early '60s when people had petrol, both food and petrol (laugh).

91. **MM:** Yeah, lovely, the two were linked?

92. **MA:** Yeah, to get there and to have something to eat when you did get there!!!

93. **MM:** So how did it blossom or did it take a while to take off? How did you advertise or was it word of mouth?

94. **MA:** Well I put an advertisement the first day, just the day before I opened, in the Examiner and it said 'dine in a country house, telephone so and so, telephone such and such a number for reservations' and that was all, and I put no name in it because I didn't want everyone to be knowing what I was doing. I remember driving down the front avenue and quite rightly I was aware of the fact that it my last day of freedom when I could get in the car and go off anywhere I wanted to and I knew I'd be tied to routine after that, for the rest of my life, and I was right. I pottered down the drive and I met a car coming up and it stopped. The man looked out the window and he said is this where the restaurant is? and I was delighted with myself. 'Yes' I said. 'Oh' he said 'I'm from Woodford Bourne and I want to sell wine to you' (laughter).

95. **MM:** They didn't hang around! (laugh).

96. **MA:** And then we just left it there until somebody wandered (in). We had a couple of parties for friends just, the first two nights we just had friends in to sort of a trial run, we didn't charge them of course. To get into it exactly and then we just sit and wait and if somebody came there was all excitement (laugh).

97. **MM:** How long did it take to develop or to take off? Were there ups and downs?

98. **MA:** Fortunately I had one or two very good customers through the winter that just kept me going. I had one or two regulars quite quickly because they realized I had something that they wanted, but it really was slow. You see the lucky thing was, because it was here in the house, we had no capital expenditure. We were able to clean up our kitchen and use it. I had enough

gumption to get rid of the cats (laugh). You know, it didn't matter if we had few people because we didn't have to pay anybody back.

99. **MM:** Anyone that came was a bonus as such?

100. **MA:** Exactly I mean I reckoned as it was my hobby, I reckoned my husband, he was meant to look after us anyway and produce the money for us. I mean that was the deal in those days (laugh) so that I knew I mustn't loose money because we were still paying back for the farm. I mean we were pretty tight and if I had been asked to build a new kitchen as they did subsequently I just would never just have done it. There is no question about that. So it didn't matter that we were going slowly and we went slowly for about two years until that first guide, the 1966 Egon Ronay guide to Ireland came out and they gave me a very, very good rating. That didn't do anything but they published, they published an account of it in *The Irish Times* and the business exploded. Three times as many straight away. We were into it then.

101. **MM:** And never looked back?

102. **MA:** No, not really no, not really. 1966 and then we had to put on rooms because of the licensing laws, you see. I just didn't want the place to be a pub; I didn't want a pub license. And they were very expensive, you had to buy two, you could only put them together, the one. Because they were inclined to reduce the number (of pubs) in the country. Perhaps they were terribly expensive, they of course went much more expensive again, but of course if you don't have the money, you don't have the money.

103. **MM:** Just when you started off did you sell wine at the beginning?

104. **MA:** Wine. I could get a wine license, straight away I had a wine license but you had people that would like a glass of brandy when they finished their meal or a gin and tonic when they arrived but you couldn't sell it. As my husband always used to say 'no Irish drinks allowed'. You couldn't sell Irish whiskey, you couldn't sell stout, you couldn't sell Smithwicks, just not allowed. But French wines and Sherries and you know what takes. And I mean when we very small and you know the customers you chance giving them a glass of brandy if they wanted it after dinner but you couldn't, that wasn't on for very long, you just couldn't do it.

105. You couldn't live like that so then we had the difficulty of knowing what to do and we put on, a hotel had to have ten bedrooms, I don't know if it's still the same, and it had to have a dinning room to hold everybody that was staying at once. Those were two of the things, and we could do that easily and we did that but we registered as a guesthouse, which was also allowed and it was just allowed, it wasn't really properly correct but it was passed and I think the idea was you could be that while you were waiting to get a hotel status. But we didn't ever want to be a hotel because we did not want to have to comply with the Inn Keepers Act, which decreed that we would have to serve meals to the traveller at all times. And it was as much as I could to do to produce dinner in the evening, I couldn't even think about giving anyone a cup of tea or anything during the day because we were flat out. There was myself and a girl from the village that had a very scanty knowledge of cooking and that was it, and we might have twenty for dinner and just the two of us and we were trying to do it really well, you know, four courses and it was all new to us, and we were really novices really. I knew how to cook but restaurant cooking is a different thing to cooking at home.

106. **MM:** And was it a set menu or did you?

107. **MA:** I did, I always had a set menu. Always three starters, and three or four second courses, and three or four main courses.

108. **MM:** But there was always three or four choices?

109.**MA:** And we always changed the menu every night so it was a complete thing. We got in what we wanted, cooked it and finished it. It worked all right anyway. That's why I had to know my numbers.

110.**MM:** Did the family eat afterwards? Did the family eat well on what didn't go?

111.**MA:** I suppose we did in the early days but then when we got a little bit bigger I went into lunch and I served a buffet lunch every day and that would be very much leftovers and all of sort the home cooking thing, I used to charge 5 shillings, I think it was. I know it wasn't very much, 5 shillings for lunch and we'd sell things like Shepherds Pie or Fish Cakes or if I had meat, it would be a cheap cut of meat or using up meat someway or another and pretty simple stuff. Scotch Eggs I remember, I remember getting French people in, they were delighted to see Scotch Eggs. They thought it was great and I remember one day a helicopter arrived, and they came in for lunch. I remember thinking what did it cost them to come here by helicopter? (laugh) and their going to get a bit of Shepherds Pie, you know something very, very inexpensive, five shilling lunch and come by helicopter for it (laugh).

112.**MM:** Who was that?

113.**MA:** I don't know who it was.

114.**MM:** And you were saying that you had a few regulars from early on. Would they have been local or would they have been business people from Cork?

115.**MA:** Once I started lunch we got a lot of business people out from Middleton and they came very regularly. A quite good trade and I kept them until the hotels and the other little restaurants started up in Middleton by then, I don't know what we were doing. That's when business people didn't really, it wasn't worth there while to come out here. We still do lunch but it has never been as big as dinner.

116.**MM:** How many rooms do you have now?

117.**MA:** We have only 32. We had 33 last year but my daughter-in-law put two into one to make a nice big room. We're still at it. In the yard there we're actually building, we're putting a little conservatory outside.

118.**MM:** So how did that progress from the 10 rooms to the 32 or the 33?

119.**MA:** Well you see I'll tell you how and why. We went along and we did very well. We continued to very well in the food cards. It was interesting actually, I'm digressing a bit now but one year I got top in every prize. Top Michelin, top Good Food Guide, top Egon Ronay and everybody knew I serving terribly simple food like rhubarb and nobody else would. I'd serve cabbage and everybody else would be looking for peppers or something, you know, peppers and tomatoes and so that it had the funny effect and the chefs, it sort of was nice for me really because suddenly people realised that I was doing something right, this young one, this young farmer's wife, you know, down there in Cork and she was getting the honours. It was a great help to the whole concept of Irish food, I think, the fact that it was appreciated. I don't have them now, I mean even Rory (O' Connell) in the kitchen who is very good, we haven't got back any of those accolades. But you were asking me....

120.**MM:** Did you feel at the time that there wasn't the confidence in our own native produce at the time, that people were following the sort of French classical training?

121.**MA:** Yes absolutely, French yes, it was largely, yes. I mean a lot of chefs anyway cook for style. I mean I'm sure you know the term 'chefing it up'. You know (laugh) you'd have a fillet of plaice and your mother would cook it maybe very nicely on a pan and put on a plate with a bit a

lemon (laugh) but get a chef and the chef would have God knows what would be on it (laugh) and my whole philosophy was and my original advertisement was dine in a country house and my whole philosophy was we are a country house and so we behave like a country house and give country house food which we means basically which we did. Go out and pick the vegetables in the garden, bring them in, cook for the dinner right away. Going over to Ballycotton to see what the boats bring in, bring it back put it straight on the pan for whatever way you were cooking it for dinner and then obviously I'd use the meat. I cooked deliberately in a country house style and it was the critics really that wanted this. It suited them, they'd got to that point. So it was a little help in a way, I have to say, I know, that sort of cooking was recognised. Did you ask me something else?

122.**MM:** Ah no we sort of talking about how it moved from ten bedrooms to thirty-two?

123.**MA:** Well I'll tell how it came, that happened. Well really what happened was farming went down. First of all we found we were paying for the farm through the mushrooms and tomatoes which were always very good for bringing in money and we had it all worked out and the first thing that happened was in the early 1970s the price of fuel shot up and the price of wages shot up and bang the glass houses became uneconomical. The Dutch, clever boys, had there own gas in the North Sea which they subsidised for their horticultural trade, and before we knew it they had undercut us from the Cork market not to mind any other market with their fruit. The French chaps came in and undercut us with their apples. The Americans gave Marshal Aid or something to the Far East to grow mushrooms (laugh). They undercut us with the mushrooms and just this happens in farming, you know, its up and down really and then suddenly my husband turned round, he always took the money anyway (laugh) and I was making the money not him (laugh) and also that it was the bedrooms that were making the money. So he pushed and pushed and pushed for more bedrooms. 'Oh goodness we've got enough of them', I'd say and he'd sat 'well we really need six more to make it economical'. He went on to his dying day saying 'if we had another six'. I'd say 'Oh don't I couldn't bear it' (laugh). So that's how we got as we are and it did a lot to keep us afloat really. I mean if we hadn't the restaurant and rooms I doubt if we'd be still on the farm. We might have managed because I suppose as well as that we'd have put more energy maybe and time into the various, we might have been more meticulous about the various lines that we were running, we might have managed. But I wasn't much of a farmer, I never had anything to do with those, always left that department to him, so I was purely in the house and with the children. I did nothing else until I started here. I don't know whether he'd ever manage the farm on his own to get it, to keep it running or whether we would..... The house, you see, takes a lot of up-keep; a house like this is expensive just to keep the rain out. I think these houses; a farm could never support a house like this.

124.**MM:** From tomatoes, there was a big glass house movement at one stage, wasn't there, as in the government backed glass house movement?

125.**MA:** Yes and down in the Claddagh or somewhere there outside Galway they put up glass houses. Dev.

126.**MM:** Yeah, and it was Dutch people who were brought in to do this. Can you explain that too me just the fuel side of things, where did the fuel come in with the glass houses?

127.**MA:** They were running on oil and the fuel suddenly..... I think the glass houses are cold at the moment. I don't have any heat in them. We have just one proper steel house left and my son has that over at the cookery school. But I don't think there using any fuel now, I think it's just too expensive. The price of oil went up, why was it, I don't know about 1970s the price shot up.

128.**MM:** I remember now around 1977 was particularly bad?

129.**MA:** It could have been, around 1977, I can't tell you what and everybody went bust, I mean we had at that stage now, My eldest girl was about, well she was older then, but when she was

about 15 or 16 we had contact with the French Parisian family and she used to exchange. She went over twice or three times and she'd stay with them and learn French and their daughter would come over here and learn English. And it was interesting because they were in the business of selling flowers, and selling them to all the hotels and restaurants in Paris and they were a very well known firm in Paris, in Versailles and years later Madam (the mother of the family) arrived here with a friend and came in for lunch and of course I went to talk to her and she told me the whole business had gone. Her husband was selling paint, her son was terribly disappointed, I don't know what he was doing but he was just looking forward to going in and taking over the business. And right through Europe the businesses that were dependent on oil went, particularly the flower business.

130.**MM:** So the accolades were coming from the guides and when did people start to copy the formula or start to copy the simplified food?

131.**MA:** I don't really know, there was never anything particular. I don't know. All I knew was that vaguely being aware, you know. There was more emphasis being given to local food. It's big now and it's a major thing now. But what was it saw the other day, I don't know whether it was actually the Department of Education, a paper or something and it was definitely stating to be sure to use local foods.

132.**MM:** I know now there's a lot of movement, the Slow Food Movement and these people, their setting up local classes for sort of teenagers and stuff and bringing a local butcher or bringing in a local, to try and actually get more focused on stuff.

133.**MA:** The smaller producer.

134.**MM:** Yeah, yeah, it's great. Again you've stayed true to your style of food and even the style of food being served, you still stay true to the sort of country house?

135.**MA:** I think we do fairly well. Rory is, at the moment I tend to do what my kitchen, six or seven years ago I suppose and Rory, Darina's brother is a chef here and he is a very artistic person and he 'chefs it up' a great deal more than I did, (laugh) but he does it very well. We do have our own gardens still and we do get as much as we can of the things. He's a little bit more intricate than I would have been with the plate (laugh).

136.**MM:** How did you get involved then with the likes of Eurotoques and when did you start?

137.**MA:** Well I'll tell you the man that was starting off Euro Toc just wrote to and asked me, he told me what it was, what he was doing, asked me if I'd start it and I.....

138.**MM:** Was it Paul Bocuse?

139.**MA:** No it was a man call Pierre Romeyer and he had a three star restaurant in Belgium but I think was because the meanwhile (laugh) for my sins had run a restaurant in Paris as well as running this place for three or four years (laugh).

140.**MM:** Tell me about that.

141.**MA:** Well I tell you what at a certain stage in the '70s the export board, what are they called, *Córas Tráchtála* CTT asked me to do sort of food for an Irish week abroad and I did it in Brussels once or twice and I did it in Holland and I did it in New York and particularly on the continent I was terribly conscious that Irish food does just went down a bomb. I was very particular. I'd bring over my own flour, I'd bring over my own salmon, I'd bring (laugh). And oh they'd say you can buy it there, and I'd say no where I'm going to get the fresh stuff here at home because I know I'll get the stuff I want and it was terrifically successful and then I came home and I said to Paddy O'Keeffe in the Irish Farmers Journal, he was the Editor and I knew him, 'we should have an Irish

restaurant abroad because people love our food and it would help to sell Irish food' and he thought it was a good idea and I knew FBD, the insurance, they had money for investment and I suggested they might do it and actually, in point of fact nobody understood what I was really saying to them either, you know. They were thinking of profit and I had said and nobody listened, it would be something that would break even...

142.**MM:** And that it was really a marketing ploy for the island of Ireland as a food island as such?

143.**MA:** Yes exactly. Like the Swiss, there was a Swiss restaurant in London. I don't know whether they made money or not but the name of Swiss food was over London because it was lovely and Paddy, I knew exactly what I wanted and then they were wondering.... They thought it was a good idea and they'd go ahead with it and they were looking for somebody to run it and they asked, I think I even told them about it, a chap called Robinson who was doing very, very well. He had a Michelin Star, he had a restaurant in Wicklow, just as he got his star his marriage broke up, that's nothing new in the restaurant business, and he was out, finished. He'd lost his restaurant, he'd lost his star, he'd lost his wife, everything gone and he was a very good chef and I suggest I told him. He went in and he didn't understand. You can't think of something and have a plan and then somebody else carry it out. He didn't even want to talk to me because he was very well qualified and he wanted to do his own thing. I understand that but it wasn't what I had seen with my experience. He did a French restaurant, he had it very well designed by a very good designer, totally into natural décor and he was trained in Lausanne and he did French food. There was nothing the French wanted less than French food from an Irish restaurant, and it didn't work. Darina and I were giving, it was the first three month course actually and we were doing sort of pilot scheme in our own kitchen here and I remember the phone rang and I picked it up and it was just about to start demonstrating, and this was Paddy O'Keeffe to say 'this man has left the restaurant, what on earth are we going do. We'll have egg all over our face'. Oh I said 'I'll do it for a bit' (laugh) just like that without thinking. I found it very hard to concentrate on the class for the rest of the morning. But so I think probably that's why they asked me to start Eurotoques in Ireland because they knew I'd be in France, running. Well the restaurant, I mean didn't do well financially at all, but it did very, very well in the guides and it was very well know. We got very good reviews.

144.**MM:** What was it called?

145.**MA:** *La Ferme Irlandaise.*

146.**MM:** *La Ferme Irlandaise.* And where was it in Paris?

147.**MA:** Well it the middle of a square called *Place du Marche Saint Honore* and it was between, you know the way everything is in a triangle and one side of the triangle was the *Avenue de l'Opera* and on the other side of the triangle, oh where the Ritz is now, and then the third one was the *Rue Saint Honore.*

148.**MM:** So it was very central.

149.**MA:** And that was *Place du Marche* and that was the market place for *Saint Honore.* It was very good and it was all little food shops and it was lovely. I remember going over, it was really so funny, let the staff get bigger and bigger, I didn't let anybody go and so as to get enough staff together to open the next restaurant and so then if we weren't busy enough and I had all this staff, everybody got their holidays which they never normally did, their fortnight in July you can have your holidays now (laugh) and we were all ready to go by the middle of August. So we drove up a couple of cars, I'll never forget it, and half the staff go into the cars, they were all crying, one person rushed back, I'll have to get some tea towel. I said I'm sure they will have them in Paris. They were running back to get everything they wanted, you know.

150.**MM:** So you were staffing them from here.

151.**MA:** From here. I let my own staff double and then we divided it in the middle of August and half stayed here and half went to Paris, roughly half. So it was really funny. Then I got there just after them and they were opening next day and I remember they were kind of fussing around and they'd come from the other restaurants in the square and they advised us 'now don't be too cheap' they didn't want us to undercut them, and there was a man in a shoe shop next door and he found me stitching covers onto the cushions, you know. I had all done in Irish cottage furniture. I chucked out all the international stuff and I had big settees and settle beds and things like that. I was stitching on the fabric, so wait one minutes, he rushed back and he got one of his big staplers and of course he had them on a minute for me (laugh) and they were lovely. It was a wonderful time, the middle of August, Paris is so quiet. Everybody is leisurely, everybody is relaxed and happy and there's none of that awful sort push that there's normally in the city at other times of the year. I that's why they offered to do I'm sure, to start Eurotoques in Ireland. So I had helped Ivan to start the IFA, the NSA as it was, the farmers association, he go stomping around the country and I used to go with him because I used to be fascinated by the whole thing. It was exciting. I reckoned I had an idea of how to start a national organisation as a result.

152.**MM:** So Ivan was paramount to the start-up of the IFA?

153.**MA:** Oh yes, he was one of them. Of course he was in *Macra na Feirme*. We were all in *Macra na Feirme* at one time and then *Macra* spawned the IFA and he went straight into it. We used to go around the little towns everywhere and had meetings, and show films, and encourage people to join the IFA, farmers.

154.**MM:** I was reading recently about Horace Plunkett and the co-op movement and the whole thing, you know.

155.**MA:** That would be earlier again.

156.**MM:** Yeah, oh much earlier. The whole thing about the butter market and all of that Newcastle West and all the Drum Collachair and all these places you know.

157.**MA:** They all had butter markets.

158.**MM:** They set up a butter market, they set up one because the firkins were being brought into Cork city to the big butter market and then they set one up in Newcastle West.

159.**MA:** Oh did they?

160.**MM:** The idea was the farmer could bring them in there and then they could be moved on mass you know, that sort of way, you know rather than.....

161.**MA:** They used to walk.

162.**MM:** They used to have to wrap them in cabbage leaves and all to try to keep the sun off them and all sorts of stuff. It's fascinating when you think how things have changed so quickly you know that.

163.**MA:** What I need to do at the moment and wanting to do badly and I have somebody that else that wants it too is that is to find out about the old mills and soda bread. I mean I know bread soda came in about 1830s and I think it took on very quickly in Ireland but I don't know about the flour mills and the sort of bread they made. You see this is the sort of thing when it's gone, it's gone, nobody can bring it back. But the reason it has come to my mind is that there's a little mill, a little steam roller mill in Cookstown and I used to get their flour. A lot of people did and the mill packed it in about two years ago and.....

164.**MM:** Is this Cookstown up North is it?

165.**MA:** No Cookstown near Macroom, not too far from Macroom. Any of the brown flour you had to mix it half and half with white to rise but this brown flour would rise with almost no white flour in it. And I keep wondering whether it's the flour stoned milled in the 19th century, it would have been damper because they wouldn't have the drying. I was thinking that the grain was softer and goes flatter and it might have risen better than it does now. The stoned flour, the dried wheat, stone ground won't rise on its own. Well if you were making bread out of stoned ground flour as you would have done in say 1860 and you would have bread soda which you know.....How does the loaf turn out? (laugh). I'll never know will I? But I would like to get hold of the steel roller mill people but I might too, yet! I might be able to get access to it.

166.**MM:** How did the cookery school start?

167.**MA:** Well that started from the same queue: Darina and I were doing this first three month course. Mainly the reason we put it on, we put it on in January, we had extra rooms that were going to be empty till Easter and my youngest daughter decided she wanted to learn how to cook and we'd gone round schools in London and they were very expensive and they couldn't take her, they were full up and all this, and we said 'so what, we'll do it ourselves' and we put on a three month course and we'd do the whole sort of *repetoire* of cooking from the very basics to as far as we'd go. So we did that and then Darina said I'd love to have a school and I said do. I used to put on courses in the winter time. That would have been about 1982 or 1981.

168.**MM:** Which daughter is this?

169.**MA:** My youngest daughter. She ran the Crawford Gallery then for a bit in Cork. She's got a family now, small children.

170.**MM:** But Wendy had been cooking for....?

171.**MA:** Wendy had been cooking, she never did afterwards, mind you (laugh).

172.**MM:** Did she not, no?

173.**MA:** No (laugh). Well she looked after the dining room actually cause I could cook you see and it just took the two of us. She was in the front and I was in the back (laugh).

174.**MM:** How long was she in the Russell?

175.**MA:** About a year I would think, in the kitchen, only in the kitchen.

176.**MM:** And she looks after the shop now I believe.

177.**MA:** She does. It's her shop. From very soon after we opened she was in a little house in the garden and it had a glass door looking out and she had a shop there. She realised that it was good. It was great for people staying, somewhere for them to go in the evening time, wander down and look. They love it and so she's always in the shop.

178.**MM:** I'm thinking now about sort the changes in food. Okay we're in 2003 now and say things started with yourself in 1967 and through the '70s. In the last 30 years or so what do you think are the significant milestones? Who do you feel have made a significant impact, maybe starting with the 70s, is there anyone in particular in the '70s?

179.**MA:** Well there was no doubt that in the early days, The Russell and Jammet's had wonderful influence on food. I mean they were very, very good. It was different to what they are doing now, but they were very good and they had this wonderful lot of waiters. I mean Dublin, I think was

one lot of Jammet's or the Jammet's waiters still left and there in a little fish restaurant in Ballsbridge next to Roly's.

180.**MY:** Oh the Lobster Pot?

181.**MA:** The Lobster Pot. Now those are the last I've seen of the Dublin waiters, and they are wonderful, impeccable really. They're wonderful. They were all trained as people in Jammet's, the Russell and probably the Hibernian as well. They were marvellous; Dublin was blessed with them for all these years. The influence on food has gone down through the country through Declan Ryan in Arbutus, through ourselves and if you think of all the people Declan has put through, all his commis going through and you see the thing about it is now, things are different because there's such an interest in food and people travel so much and they read so much. I mean those early days there wasn't the experience or the education or the know-how coming into the country at all. I mean there was Elizabeth David who opened up Mediterranean food for the UK and I suppose she had some influence here as well. Well I suppose she was educating the consumer more than the restaurant. The restaurants were firmly held in the sort of grip of the French system of cooking, the Escoffier sort of teaching, still. I don't suppose it's so strong now, it can't be at all now.

182.**MM:** Well it's changing but you still see quite a bit of it you know.

183.**MA:** But I had great respect for French classical cooking because it was wonderful. If you get a French chef into the kitchen he's always good.

184.**MM:** But most of the menus were the same back then, wherever you went?

185.**MA:** Yeah, they would have been very much and you would get, going down through the country, you'd get vegetables, they were destroyed, you know, with the cooking (laugh).

186.**MM:** Yeah, totally overcooked.

187.**MA:** Yeah you'd get wonderful quality meat, certainly would be well cooked (laugh). Very basic, brilliant food, wonderful food everywhere. Raw materials…..

188.**MM:** Raw materials but totally overcooked (laugh). Cooked to death!

189.**MA:** The beef might not be very well hung all right (laugh), it could be tough.

190.**MM:** I was looking at in the early 70s, there was the likes of Ballylickey mentioned, there was Newport House up around Mayo and there was the Cashel Palace, I think was mentioned as well or maybe that was later on. There was only really a handful, like Arbutus Lodge really was you know, Declan Ryan and his brother Michael, they did wonderful work didn't they?

191.**MA:** They did. And Declan in my opinion, and I have said it to them myself Declan was the best, a terribly fine cook, he was a wonderful bread man. I was always telling them, 'Declan, you stay in the kitchen and put Michael in the dining room because Michael is very affable, great fun, very nice'. Declan's a brilliant cook and they swapped roles and it was a pity but anyway. Michael made a great job with Isaacs. Ian and Cannice Sharkey used to work with him.

192.**MM:** Do you remember places like Snaffles and the Soup Bowl, and places like that in Dublin?

193.**MA:** I do. I don't think I ever went to the Soup Bowl. I think I might have done once all right, one night, which was fine you know. Snaffles was good. It was unusual you see. It was great. Snaffles and Heidle Mac Neice in Kinsale, they were all the start of the trendy little restaurants, with lots of atmosphere, lots of buzz, young people coming in and something different. Different sort of food, they were great, they were real trend setters.

194.**MM:** What followed those, were their any others that sort of made it followed those?

195.**MA:** Well no, I don't think followed them so much as developed what they were doing really, and who came next? I don't know who came next. It kind of died down after that, L'Ecrivain I don't, that's not going so long you see. John Howard…..

196.**MM:** John Howard Le Coq Hardi?

197.**MA:** Yes he was the person that followed on. Then there was a few others like the Dubliner, the Grey Door, none of those were the same.

198.**MM:** There was a fellow now, Rolland had a place out in, I think it was Pierre Rolland's son, had a place out in Dalkey and then the Guinea Pig was out in Dalkey as well, Mervyn.

199.**MA:** Yeah, no didn't ever go. But then there was the man, the chef in Roly's, what's his name? Colin O'Daly. He was the next one to come in and he was very good. It was such a pity when he changed, it's awfully dangerous you know, moving restaurant. You go into a restaurant and make a name, that's what their coming for. You move it, nothing is right.

200.**MM:** The same thing nearly happened to Michael Clifford in Cork?

201.**MA:** It did happen to him badly and I think unfortunately Kevin Thornton, is the same trouble now.

202.**MM:** Last Monday week, he was voted 25th best restaurant in the world by a poll which is interesting, you know.

203.**MA:** Oh my God, he needs that. He needs an injection of money or something. You see I think that's the think, a really good chef is really an artist and he's not a businessman. The really good businessman is never a good chef (laugh) because he's watching the margins. He knows when to stop pouring the ingredients (laugh).

204.**MM:** Do you remember The Mirabeau at all or Sean Kinsella?

205.**MA:** I do indeed yes.

206.**MM:** Did you ever out there?

207.**MA:** I did, I ate in The Mirabeau. It was great. It was very stylish and quite good food. It was good fun. He did things slightly differently you know, which was great.

208.**MM:** He was flamboyant I believe or…..?

209.**MA:** Well I was never in the set that was really taking the roof off (laugh). We were quieter people coming up from the country, interested in food, we weren't really throwing ourselves around (laugh) too much. He was nice. I tell you why he was a great chap. When I got my Michelin star he was one of the first to write and congratulate me.

210.**MM:** Ah, that was nice.

211.**MA:** I thought a lot of that. So you know he was a real person. But again he couldn't cope with the finances. And the same, poor Michael Clifford was the same, you know. It was that, they're really concentrating on food. They should have somebody else that looks after the money and just tell them what to do.

Discussion about Colin O'Daly

212.**MM:** I'm thinking about other people, the funny thing is that there is not all that many people who go the long road, who've been there, consistently over any long period of time. I'm thinking say Aidan McManus now in the King Sitric has been there for quite a while. Mervyn Stewart is still there. Ernie Evans then....

213.**MA:** Poor Ernie, yes.

214.**MM:** Did you know Ernie?

215.**MA:** I did yeah. I never thought Ernie was that good actually but he was a tremendous host. I mean that was a great place to go to Glenbeigh, the hotel. He was just great fun and the food was good enough. Oh yes I have stayed Glenbeigh, I have been their. I always, I don't know if I ever stayed with his mother. I was always to stay with his mother to see what she did and her little was quieter. In many ways it suited me a little better. It wasn't mobbed with a big Chelsea crowd with lots of drink it would have been more comfortable really. Just seeing what she was doing and I never really saw what she was doing. It's a great pity I didn't. One thing, in a different place, I in fact I went over with Kevin Thornton, I do believe it was, perhaps it wasn't, I also had been with Kevin Thornton but I used to go over to the Bocuse d'Or competitions as a judge and we'd be there for a few nights and we'd go out around and the Mére Brazier Restaurant it's still there, you know the famous woman chef and I went there and it was absolutely extraordinary, it was like going into a museum. They had the same dishes on and they were flat, they weren't exciting, and the whole thing was sort of *passé* you could call it, it was gone, it was another era. I wondered whether it was that we'd all moved on and you know like you go into your old, old aunt's home or your grandparent's home and it's.....

216.**MM:** You look at the décor and you go.....How could you have hung those curtains (laugh) or whatever?

217.**MA:** Exactly, yeah!... Whether it was that or whether it was that they hadn't got the quality of ingredients that she used to cook with, I didn't know. I remember being puzzled about it.

218.**MM:** So maybe based on that our expectations have risen?

219.**MA:** Yes, eating in a different way, the food that was for eating in a different way.

220.**MM:** Yeah, so that the old times aren't always the best necessarily as such. Maybe a lot of it is rose tinted glasses?

221.**MA:** Some of it anyway. Some of it I'm afraid.

222.**MM:** And how often did you go to Lyon for that competition?

223.**MA:** I went about three or four times but I didn't really enjoy doing it in the end and I kind of got out of it (laugh).

Discussion on who represented Ireland at Bocuse d'Or competition in Lyon over the years which included Colin O' Daly, Kevin Thornton, Neil Mac Fadden, Eugene Mc Sweeney, Nevin Maguire.

224.**MM:** What do you think of those sort of competitions or had you, were you involved with sort of any other sort of competitions or judging.

225.**MA:** Well I used to go to them. Well I'm always completely different to what other judges think (laugh). I never tally with what they say because I'm always looking for quality in the

particular food rather, well I don't know but I usually am for whatever reason. What do I think about them? Well I suppose, well you do see, I mean you see all sorts of innovation which is good fun to know and all that and the skills are great, you know, what they can do with food and how they can present it. It's great. I don't think it would ever make probably good restaurant (food) because it's too time consuming, but so what, you know. It's great to do it once, to have the ability. It is an art form and it's well worth looking at you know. Both I found the whole thing eventually, I was getting older then, I was getting into my 70s and all the standing and I had arthritis in both knees as well and that didn't help and all the tasting got too much.

226. **MM:** When did you see, I'm thinking about sort of the beginning of the 90's and such and sort of a big movement towards celebrating Ireland as a food country, you know what I mean.

227. **MA:** Oh yeah, the Irish food. The trouble was I started a Paris restaurant too soon. It was before the time. They would have done very well now and they might have seen the point of it now.

228. **MM:** But the Paris restaurant, was it backed, did CTT, did they back it?

229. **MA:** No, not particularly. The only people that backed it were FPD.

230. **MM:** But then they were backing but you were paying them back as such (laugh).

231. **MA:** Yeah, they were the hard men you know, really. Well I wasn't even paying back, they were generous enough actually I should say that. But it was, the money just was not coming in, you know. Not as it should do, and we had a lot of trouble. You see the trouble with that restaurant, the lease was running out, it was a wonderful situation and it was a very good buy but then when you were in, you discovered why. The lease was running out, nearly gone and eventually it ran out and they didn't renew it because the building was owned by the mother-in-law I think of the man that lived in the flat above the restaurant, he didn't want a restaurant there and he fought and tried to get us out as only a French man can fight. And he did the most extraordinary things: I mean he complained about us to everybody. He complained about us to the health authority, the bar authorities. He complained we were making too much noise at night. You name it, he did it. He was always having the police around for something or other we were supposed to be doing wrong and my son-in-law was there a lot of the time. He's great and he had very good French and he'd have them all in drinking Irish coffees and things like that. We laid the tables outside on the pavement for lunch. He'd lean out his windows and he'd throw crumbs on the table. Before we knew where we were we'd have a half a dozen pigeons messing the cloths (laugh). And one day we were all here in Ballymaloe and we had a girl there and she was managing. She's French. She rang up in a state and she said a whole lot of mice had fallen through the ceiling in the middle of the lunch service (laugh). And the whole lot ran out screaming (laugh). I don't know he got them in and dropped them into the restaurant. I mean that's French, French people are extraordinary. I mean it's very funny what they'll do.

232. I was working in the kitchen here and I had the French pastry chef who had come to work with me and he was good and he was proud of himself but he was making puff pastry and I knew it wasn't going to rise. I could see what he was doing. I knew there was no hope so I very quietly went round and made another batch of puff pastry and made the vol-au-vent or whatever it was that I wanted and put it in the oven and went off and said nothing, let him do his too. I didn't want that, I mean it definitely wasn't going to work and I wasn't having to go into the dining room with that. So anyway after a while Darina comes round, she was in the kitchen some times. 'Who turned this oven off' she said. Cause I knew who turned it (laugh). Just typical French. It's great (laugh). It's like, you see that in the paper today, Chirac send Tony Blair a case of wine worth £1,000 and said 'you are friend'. Yesterday was Tony Blair's birthday.

233. **MM:** His 50th birthday, that's right.

234.**MA:** And he got a case of wine from Chirac and it's just like that in the Euro-Toques. I had a terrible row over, there was a man, a French chef and he was abominable in a meeting and I had this pretty powerful, I had just been resigned as President and I had power, I still have it if I wanted it but I keep out of it and I was shocked and I wrote to the head of the French Euro-Toques and I said he must resign or apologise and I put it very strongly. The next time there was a meeting he was there. What did he do, he came up and kissed me (laugh).

235.**MM**: (Laugh). The best way of disarming you!

236.**MA:** Oh, they're something else!

237.**MM:** How long did you spend with Euro Toque?

238.**MA:** Oh I've been in it and still in it. You see I started it here in 1986.

239.**MM:** And what do you think you've achieved with it?

240.**MA:** We haven't achieved as much as we would have hoped to have achieved, definitely, but because we were fighting the food laws. But the only thing is you know, constant dripping wears away the stone, we're now beginning between us all it's, again between the constant resolutions going up and the constant demands that we'd be making, Europe and also we know that other people, we've seen laterally, it was just, at first we didn't know how to tackle the whole thing.

241.It was started because this man living in Brussels could see what they were doing to the animals, the hormones; you know all the terrible things. It was not producing good food, because you can't have top level cooking unless you have top level food and we were lobbing, lobbing as best we could, but not directly, for better quality food all the time and now and since then I'm still in it. The Euro Toque is still going ahead in for instance in Wicklow doing wonderful things, David Byrne. We had him over and they had all, the Dublin Euro Toque members had got all the small producers from all over the country, they had the most fantastic spread and we had, they had a sort of conference before and they had influenced, David Byrne. By now, we're not the only people because Slow Food has started up since and their doing a bit in a different way and I know the producers, there now is a network because now, a consumer, like you were saying, 'use local food in Ireland, there is a consumer movement. I don't mean an organised consumer movement.

242.**MM:** But a trend as such or a.....?

243.**MA:** A trend coming in and they're beginning to bend and they have a new, I've asked them to send to it to me. They have a new sort thing out that now, that there's a sort of theory that they're going to work towards that food is produced in a traditional way, that has always been safe, should not be subjected to the new legislation, and that the artisans be relieved and kept there, which is right but that is now coming from the Food Safety Authority in Europe. You see they were tremendously manipulated by, and still are, by multinationals. And this was closing down all the butchers with the multi-nationals, absolutely. I know it is because I've heard the same argument coming from a lot of meat factories here and then you go to somebody in Europe and they say oh they tell me in the parliament and they tell you exactly the same thing as somebody in the meat factory would tell you. So I know that. It's very slowly in all these years had a big effect, I think. One of the influences only.

244.**MM:** I remember around two years ago there was the launch of the Bridgestone Guide above in Dublin in the Ely Restaurant but I remember you were talking about a local mill or bakery that had just shut down because one more legislation was the straw that broke the camel.

245.**MA:** I was talking about that.

246.**MM:** You were talking about it you know. I meant to write to you at the time or the whole thing, I'd been watching Duncan Stewart in that 'Our House' and he was in an old house and there was a grant available for a couple who had bought this old house. There was a grant available to put the new roof on it because it was a historical, like because the house was no more than a 120 years old and it was in Dublin. But there was a grant available for that. Now surely because it was to do with heritage, then surely our food is as much a part of heritage? Is heritage only bricks and mortar? It's terrible you know.

247.**MA:** It is terrible actually because like we were saying, about the flowers like there's no way you'll ever know. Food above all things!

248.**MM:** I see there are some people who are keeping seed banks (the seed savers) and there holding onto these things, once they're gone, once they're mutated or whatever they're gone for ever. So fair play to people who do that sort of work you know.

249.**MA:** It's illegal. This is the EU again, and this is the power people like, you know the big cloth people in America – Monsanto. They're (The Seed Savers) not allowed to sell them. You can't buy them from them. And you can join the organisation. They don't charge enough. I suppose they need their members, as many as possible but it's absolutely wrong. I mean it's dangerous for the planet.

250.**MM:** I was going to ask have you seen much of a change or what do you think of the quality of student? Are people getting involved in restaurants now or kitchen, but then most of the people you would experience would come mostly through the school wouldn't they?

251.**MA:** We always get them from Cathal Brugha Street. Every year we have somebody, you know. We sometimes have a lot of Australians through a hotel school and we have two Tunisians that did a hotel school in Tunis.

252.**MM:** Very good.

253.**MA:** (Start of tape 2) Clean up, you know how to cope with the electricity when it goes wrong. That's what it's all about.

254.**MM:** That you need to be multi.....

255.**MA:** The waste, I do think the waste and the environment problems at the moment should be something thought about. Maybe it is. (Laugh). I think, God knows what's going to happen to me. I went into the kitchen the other day and I'd forgotten something. I knew that the Health Inspector had been there and I vowed I'd keep away from it. Not responsible. But anyway I came head on in front of her and I just asked her who she was and she told me and I said 'is that a plastic uniform you've got on'. She said 'yes'. 'But what do you do with it when you're finished?' 'Oh' she said 'we throw it away'. 'Do you mean to say you're adding more plastic to the waste'. I thought (laugh) you shouldn't do that. So they'll take it out on me. (Laugh). I couldn't help it, I've suffered so much at their hands.

256.**MM:** When did you, you know that's another very interesting thing, the legislation, when did you start to notice Health Inspectors?

257.**MA:** Well I had them in first day. Well, you had to make sure. Well you had to have one in, to get your wine licence and yeah they were grand, they said just don't keep anything on the floor. You know lift everything up and that was fine, no problem. When I had the new kitchen I notified them again, to make sure that everything was spot on, as what they'd want. It was fine and then we ran into trouble because we always used well water in the house. The whole area came to a stage where the wells were being polluted and we got a sickness in the house and I was out of my mind!! I suppose I did it wrong. I said to the doctor, 'oh for goodness sake, just tell them will

you, ever would the Health Inspector come out to me and see what's wrong'. And that man did not stop until he had me in court, and that was really awful. He was out to get me.

258.**MM:** You had invited him as such.

259.**MA:** Yeah and he came and he had me. You know it's like asking. The mouse asking the cat to come in (laugh) to share the settee! (laugh)

260.**MM:** When was that?

261.**MA:** I suppose it was some time in the '80s. So I've had a great respect and disregard for them ever since. Em, one shouldn't, but if you have an experience like that.....

262.**MM:** Yeah, yeah. And what was forced? Did you have to change like, did you have to invest in different, separate refrigeration or what was that?

263.**MA:** Well we do all that all the time. We do what they ask us to do.

264.**MM:** What were the big changes you had to make?

265.**MA:** Because of that. Oh he was determined, I mean a funny thing, I mean you'd have the kitchen really clean but he'd find something. He'd always find something and he just was horrible. The funny thing was if I wasn't there everything was all right so this particular day I wasn't there. My son-in-law was there and showed him around. He gave him a clean bill of health. Next time he came and everything was spotlessly clean but a bag of fish had arrived and somebody pulled it across the kitchen floor and that was the only thing, the streak on the floor. Nothing else, everything else was perfect and he just laid into me at that stage and then I got the summons and that was it really you know. He was just out to get me if he could and he always can.

266.**MM:** He had the power and he wanted to show you?

267.**MA:** When it went to the court, the judge was looking at it and he said ' oh' he said 'yes, and the previous one she was perfectly clear, there was nothing wrong, the kitchen was perfect and at that', 'fine her five shillings or five pounds'. It was nothing. Just five pound (laugh). And that Judge on New Years Eve he would come and end up in my kitchen at about three or four o'clock in the morning you know (laugh) and have a glass of champagne and looking for something to eat (laugh).

268.**MM:** That's good. The other things that have changed over the years but then hasn't changed as dramatically since you were involved was the likes of the sort of the gas, Aga's like?

269.**MA:** Well the Aga's didn't last long. That was a disaster! (laugh).

270.**MM:** When you started off first running the family home, was a solid fuel cooker?

271.**MA:** It was an Aga, yeah. We started off with that but we then got an ancillary one very quickly and then we had to take everything out.

272.**MM:** So it was gas after that?

273.**MA:** Gas.

274.**MM:** No, because I've been talking to one lad, he was in the Dolphin (Hotel) during the war and he says that the coal was short and that it was turf that they were using time. He said that

sometimes he'd be going out as a commis chef and he'd be chopping logs out the back to feed the stove (laugh) and that sort of stuff.

275.**MA:** That's right. And it would be soaking wet, the turf. No, we were always on gas and the Aga in the home.

276.**MM:** I'm trying to think what other things there are. Is there anyone who has really impressed you in Ireland food wise over the years?

277.**MA:** Well of course the old chefs, I was very impressed by them when I was young, Rolland and the one that was in Jammet's. Let me think now, John Howard I have a great respect for, I must say and Patrick Guilbaud's restaurant I had great respect for.

278.**MM:** Guillaume

279.**MA:** Yeah, the ones that are getting the top accolades are very, very good, all of them.

280.**MM:** Yeah. What do you think of the standard of food in the country generally?

281.**MA:** I think it's come on in leaps and bounds. I mean you can get a really good meal. The funny thing is I had family that came home to me after being in England for a few, a week or something. Oh they couldn't get back to Irish food, the food in England was desperate.

282.**MM:** So we're getting places as they say?

283.**MA:** I think we are, yeah and I think we'll hold on to a certain standard. Hopefully we'll be able to hold on. But the only trouble is they'll have to actively regard food as a culture that's worth keeping because I mean the people that are producing the really good food and I'm at the moment actually getting out a book listing the ones in Cork and their doing it because they just passionately believe in it. There not doing it for, their doing it for peanuts, their doing it because can do it, they know it marvellously good and some of the cheese makers are doing very well fortunately, because the vegetable growers are sort of pathetic you know. Organic, beautiful organic vegetables and the farmer's markets are great saving to them because they're getting proper prices for them. And people won't pay the price for food and they'll never pay the price for food and they reason nobody want them to, I mean the Farmer's Journal came out with in 19....., it's quite a long time ago like in the '50s or '60s, 70% of the industrial wage was spent on food and at the moment something like 30%. Now, okay supposing you weren't going for good food, supposing everybody was going to spend 70% of their wages on food, okay, nobody can buy cars, nobody can go on holidays. To begin with they won't want to, secondly the whole economy is simply is going to go sideways. I mean it's built in. The only thing that always amazes me is the way actually petrol can go up. Petrol goes up and before you know where you are it's absorbed into the system. It goes up and up and up and that's as essential really as food, really moving round and that does seem to get, the rises in petrol does seem to get absorbed into the system.

Food would have to go up very slowly and should go up. There's no intention of it really except this consumer swing back to more natural foods. I mean to read the Farmer's Journal they're only thinking of getting it cheaper and cheaper.

284.**MM:** Is there any foods that you don't seem much of now-a-days that you know were common or that you enjoyed or.....?

285.**MA:** I suppose, I must think what they were. Well, take fish. There was a little man in Cork and he had a business which was for exporting bass, bream, and salmon. He's gone. It's terrible. They'll come to their senses and try and save it and save the fish before it's too late and it'll upset the whole ecology of the sea and everything. It's dreadful what they're allowed.....

Discussion on Mark Kurlansky's books *Cod* and *Salt.*

286.**MM:** Did you hear, there used to be stories in the war, people coming over to Jammet's, like American Generals and stuff coming over to Jammet's to eat or…..?

287.**MA:** The whole of England came over to eat steaks here. They did, England, not Americans, English. The big thing was to come over to Ireland for weekends and they were just going mad for steaks. There was no steaks served in England, you see, during the war. I mean it was rationed. They had enough in one sense but they were very short, they couldn't eat what they wanted. And then you see they were very hungry through the '50s. So it was like '43 it started, was it, '39 it started, '45 it finished and it was then shortages of food went right on through the '50s. Worse than during the war, they say, in England.

288.**MM:** Because the whole system had changed. The women had taken over (laugh). They had to!

289.**MA:** But during the war years, yeah and then the fellows came home and a terrible upheaval really.

290.**MM:** It's interesting all right. But anyway it augured well for yourselves here because there was plenty, there was after the economic war, there was great markets to be had? It was a blessing in disguise in a way.

291.**MA:** It was a blessing in disguise, it didn't last though!

292.**MM:** The Economic War went on for about seven years, didn't it?

293.**MA:** It did (the Economic War). It was for almost the '30s. I don't know what year De Valera was elected. I remember the elections actually and of course my family would have been Fine Gael you see and De Valera got in and it was terrible. When DeValera got in it wasn't particularly terrible (laugh). I noticed things to be just the same (laugh). As far as a child was concerned, as to what was going to happen (laugh).

294.**MM:** And how about Ivan's family, were they Fianna Fail or were they Fine Gael?

295.**MA:** No they would have been Fine Gael. Look, if you were Fianna Fáil in those days you didn't mix with Fine Gael. We started *Macra Na Feirme* in the village, my husband and I don't know who started it from out there. I remember Ivan being asked to go out to a meeting, this business started up and they got quite strong and then we women joined in and but it was said that there were families in Shanagarry that never spoke to each other, since the Civil War until the young people joined in *Macra Na Feirme* and met each other again. All living farmers, not in the village but you know in the area.

296.**MM:** I'd heard that said about the GAA before that you had brought because people came in to play in match, people who would have fought on separate sides and that it was the game that brought them together again because they would have never…..So *Macra* had the same effect.

297.**MA:** *Macra* had the same effect, yeah.

298.**MM:** Now the Irish Country Women's Association was already there or…..

299.**MA:** No it was only started in '40s.

300.**MM:** Oh right, okay. So that was part of *Macra na Feirme* then was it?

301.**MA:** No, no. It was quite separate. No the Irish Country Women's Association, Country Markets's was started in the '40s. I don't know when the Irish Country Women's Association, it may have been earlier.

302.**MM:** Actually there is a book on it. There's a book, I just noticed recently on it and I must actually get it and have a look at it.

303.**MA:** You know people were very idealistic, at the, coming up to the trouble times, and immediately after it and it was dreadful that it all exploded into a Civil War. But because there was so many people of every class and creed, that were full of plans for Ireland you know.

304.**MM:** Yeah. There was the whole revolution, like the sort of Artistic Revolution you know what I mean. The language and the sport and the art and everything.....Everything was blossoming. And theatre and everything, yeah, yeah.

305.**MA:** Everything, suddenly Ireland was taking a new life.

306.**MM:** And it was all wiped out in the Civil War.

307.**MA:** It was wiped out, a lot of it and a lot of people disillusioned. Not completely everybody but I think the Irish Country Women's Association, I don't know if it was started as far as back as that or whether it was later, I just don't know. But I know country markets was started about the '40s.

308.**MM:** What was the philosophy behind the country markets?

309.**MA:** Oh it was particularly one person, Gonne was her name, I can't think of what her Christian name was. I used to know her as Ms. Gonne and she was in the Irish Country Women and the whole idea was that you and I'm sure that you would have these groups of or you had already the groups of Irish Country Women and that they would be able to sell their stock. I mean it could have happened in the '30s and that they would have a little market where they could bring their cakes and their eggs and their garden produce and their sweet peas or whatever they had, and they would have a little place where they could sell it. A very good idea! It's a pity, I think they made a mistake of having it always indoors. The farmer's markets are outdoors and even though they got drowned last Saturday all right, but if they're outdoors they're seen but on the other hand country markets are stuffed, their stuff goes in the twinkling of an eye. You could sell it all right.

310.**MM:** They were very strong then, there was always this sort of country fair, the competition then between the best cake and the jams?

311.**MA:** Well that was very much *Macra na Feirme.* They had the competitions. I don't know if the Country Women did or not.

312.**MM:** And that was set up or *Macra na Feirme* had those competitions, would it be once a year or would it be.....

313.**MA:** In the summer time. There was in those days, they'd be a group in Shanagarry and there be was one in Cloyne, they'd be one up here in Dungourney, all around the little villages, all around Cork and they'd each have their field day and they'd each have their competitions and then in Lent each one of them be putting on a play and what else did they do throughout the year. They were very good to teach people how to speak in public, they had all sort of public speaking and debates and things like that.

314.**MM:** So really they were an integral part of the community and the social side of the community?

315.**MA:** They were. And I notice now the young farmers, even still I notice they come across as being very well able to speak, very well able to express themselves.

316.**MM:** The Allen family are Quakers? Were you a Quaker?

317.**MA:** I wasn't. No I wasn't when I got married. I became a Quaker after a bit.

318.**MM:** Did that, excuse my ignorance, do Quakers drink?

319.**MA:** Well a lot of them don't and most of them would never drink to excess. Most unlikely, but most of them now-a-days would have a glass of wine. But they would, all of them, if you had a bunch of Quakers in the pub, supposing you had four Quakers there definitely would be one or two that wouldn't touch, they wouldn't have anything. They'd be one who'd have a glass of wine and in moderation. They drink in moderation.

320.**MM:** And do you, I'm trying to remember the philosophy. Is there quite a strong work ethic isn't there within the Quaker.....

321.**MA:** Not really so much. You see what actually happened they weren't allowed to go university originally and so the bright ones started businesses and the businesses did very well and they had direct, their ethics were that you had to be fair, and you had to state what you thought your goods were worth. You asked for that price and that was the big thing in the early 18th Century, you know. You never asked for more than you thought it was worth and you very carefully managed your business and if you went into debt, if you went bankrupt, you had to leave the society. You must not go bankrupt. You had to mind your business.

322.**MM:** And yet not be greedy as such, only charge what was.....?

323.**MA:** Charge what was..... That you were supposed to have your solid business, what you were doing, you were serving the community, you were doing it honestly and that meant you had to look after it pretty well (laugh).

324.**MM:** You know I actually remember, was it the likes of Maguire and Patterson and Guinness's would have followed the same tradition I think. Maguire and Patterson's were the whole idea of this sort of what we call human resource management and all that sort of sprung from that Quaker movement.

325.**MA:** It could have been because I think Guinness's were not, they were Church of Ireland.

326.**MM:** Yeah, but it was the Maguire and Patterson's who started off first and they had, I think they were Quakers but they had a welfare officer but they really looked after their staff as such. They had this sort of, they felt nearly responsible for their staff or they felt sort of a family sort of thing which was good. No I worked with.....

327.**MA:** Guinness's did too.

328.**MM:** Guinness's yeah, Guinness's were very good that way as well. Very, very good and again had the swimming pool and everything you know the doctor and the whole lot yeah.

I worked with an old pal of yours around ten years ago, Dick Fletcher.

329.**MA:** Oh did you?

330.**MM:** In, on the Galley in New Ross.

331.**MA:** Yeah, yeah.

332. **MM:** So I used to make your brown bread (laugh). It was the Galley brown bread (treacle bread) but it was the Ballymaloe brown bread. But I saw then in you book, I noticed I was looking at your book yesterday in the library you had said it had come from an American recipe was it or.....?

333. **MA:** No, no that was a slight adaptation of, it was an English woman actually that first published that recipe way back during the war and I had a neighbour in Shanagarry and she brought down this loaf of bread to us to try. She'd seen it and made it. We thought it was lovely you know, we'd never tasted anything so nice and we all started making it.

334. **MM:** Everywhere I've gone since I've made it and I've made sure that the students, every student I have makes it. One tin of treacle, three-and-a-half pounds of wholemeal flour, a dessertspoon of salt and two pints of tepid water and an ounce each of fresh yeast or else half an ounce of.....

335. **MA:** You know exactly what's in it (laugh).

336. **MM:** And the trouble is I used to make it in batches of four so if someone asked me 'what's it for one loaf?', 'ah here, just divide it down yourself' I say (laugh). But it's beautiful!

337. **MA:** That's extraordinary. (laughing) Well she lived to be a very old woman. She was a food nut, if you like and I think she's still alive somewhere in the North of Scotland. She's well into her 90s. She must be 100 now.

338. **MM:** It's great to see how recipes move along.

339. **MA:** Yes it's very funny where recipes go. I mean I would say like recipes, cooking is like talking, you listen to what somebody says and it kind of goes in and then you start saying it yourself, it's like that with cooking.

340. **MM:** But even I think as you were saying about Elisabeth David, that really you had to understand what she was talking, she's so passionate about what she was talking about you had to some idea to pick up on what exactly she was saying (laugh). It wasn't for the novice (laugh).

341. **MA:** I've been let down two or three times by following her too closely (laugh).

342. **MM:** Well I was reading there yesterday (laugh) throw a cup of flour in and the cooking (laugh). How did come about actually, that was 1977 and that was the cook book. How did that come about?

343. **MA:** I'll tell you how it came about, I was doing the morning, I'd get the lunch, I'd go off where I was actually but just before you came in today, em, you rang me, I was down in the bog house, and I wasn't with it because I was working very hard on something else and I wasn't even thinking of what was going to happen after lunch and anyway I was going off to my retreat and I was passing the shop through car park and I saw three people looking through the window of the shop, and the shop was closed, and I could just see that they looked like slightly interesting people, not the usual run of the mill. So I just went up to them and I said you know, are you wanting to get in or something, are you alright and they said we really came down for lunch but we know it's too late and I said 'come in and we'll look around and find you something'. I kind of felt it was the right thing to do so I turned back into the kitchen and sat them down in the dinning room and I got them something. Whatever we had and when they'd finished their lunch they decided they were going to cancel their flight and stay for the weekend and they actually were, the party consisted of an American man, I don't know whether you knew him, he was the cartoonist in the Sunday Times and a Welsh couple, he was, he actually had a job in dock yards, administrating and she also had his own little publishing company, and she worked with him.

They were a couple, and anyway by the time they'd had their lunch they decided they'd stay the weekend. By the time they'd stayed the weekend they decided they'd come back for their summer holiday and by the time, just before they came to the end of their summer holidays they asked me if I'd do a book with them, and he would illustrate it, and they other man would publish it. We ran into a lot of trouble because the other man was very peculiar. He never published it. I had to actually in the end, it was there sitting there for years, like two years or more and in the end Paddy O'Keeffe said he'd publish it but I knew he couldn't because I'd signed with the other man and I actually had to fly over and buy it back before it came out. I can't remember the price – a few hundred.

344. He was just, they were very difficult to deal with right through. It's full of mistakes because they, it's still full mistakes, I'm meant to be editing it again and getting it straight but I don't know how to get time to do it, I'm doing another book at the moment. It's quite different. But I'd be writing something and I'd send it over. 'Is this the way you want it?' Because they wanted it laid out that way, the recipe is more or less on one side and the write-up the other side. 'Is this the way you want it?' They'd say 'yes' and they'd keep it and then they'd say we want the rest of it right away. And it was just one autumn and I spent the whole autumn sitting in the kitchen, writing, writing, writing and I used to send it off in such a high, without coming back and checking it myself, they'd let the mistakes go through and then they never published after that, after such a hurry it never came out and then I was staying with Mel Kavanagh in London and a letter came through the post one morning and oh yes, this man had rung, Mel was supposed to get an advanced payment and he rang and he said it had gone in the post. But it didn't come, didn't come. Suddenly a letter came, an envelope came and Mel opened it and there was no money in it. That was happening all the time. You couldn't deal with them.

345. **MM:** And had they given you a down payment or..?

346. **MA:** No.

347. **MM:** And yet you had to buy the rights back?

348. **MA:** Yes.

349. **MM:** They had actually got you to sign something?

350. **MA:** They had gone to a little bit of expense all right in getting laid out. They had cost some expense.

351. **MM:** It shows you, forewarned is forearmed with these thing, you know what I mean. They can get complicated.

352. **MA:** Publishing is a jungle!

353. **MM:** So you're working on something else at the moment?

354. **MA:** I'm only just working. It's really a listing.

355. **MM:** Oh that's what you were saying.

356. **MA:** I've a lot to do with a consumer group in Cork. I sort of partly started that. It's called Free Choice Consumers and we meet once a month. It's very interesting. We have it on a different subject every month. It's nearly always food or related to food and we get the people in that are doing that sort of thing. We then get a good listing of all the people that are in, we have a shellfish people, people collecting shellfish in March and we now we have all the data on the shellfish.

357. **MM:** So this is all the edible shellfish around the country?

358.**MA:** Around Cork, only County Cork, just Cork, that's enough I think, I couldn't do anymore. I certainly couldn't attempt to do anymore, I wouldn't dream of doing it. I am doing it for Cork and for myself to keep the stuff coming in. It was very useful, what we find out is very useful to know.

359.**MM:** New contacts, new people.

360.**MA:** Yeah, it's much bigger and more comprehensive and more time consuming than I thought it would be.

361.**MM:** I know yeah. These things always are (laugh).

362.**MA:** They always are (laugh). Well that's it.

363.**MM:** That's brilliant!

End of Interview